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ABSTRACT

In four conference presentations newspaper librarians presented information about their photograph storage and retrieval operations. They discussed picture sources, selection and weeding, picture evaluation, picture quality, ways photos are used, filing methods, source books for illustrative material, file subject coding, ways of dealing with other newspaper staff members, photograph copying methods and technology, and labeling. Subjects which arose during a question and answer period included costs, personnel, oversize pictures, picture files in the library versus picture files in the newspaper's other departments, map files, microfilmed photo collections, electronic systems, and possibilities for computerized image storage. A bibliography on picture storage and retrieval is included, along with a list of illustration books. Two examples of photo subject headings with subheadings are provided, one on President Nixon and one on Vietnam. (LS)

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Pittsburgh, Pa.

Photo Storage and Retrieval

by

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Photo Storage and Retrieval

by

Joy Hill

I have brought the only copy that I could rescue from the entire Gannett building of something that might be of interest to new librarians and small library operations. This is a publication that was put out essentially by the Gannett group for their smaller papers that are dealing with photographers just coming into news photography, editors, reporters who are being moved up to editors, etc. It's called Focus on Photography and it was put together by Peter Hickey, which is a name some of you will know. It talks about what makes a good picture -- how to evaluate a photo in terms of what kind of metal it will make, how to crop and so on.

We go from the sublime to the ridiculous here because I have only about 200,000 pictures. It feels like an awful lot more than that sometimes; but we are a medium sized newspaper with a medium sized staff and naturally a deficient library staff in terms of numbers if not enthusiasm. We cover all of six counties and parts of four counties. In some areas we're in competition with Buffalo and in some we're in competition with Syracuse. We put out fourteen editions a day, six days a week, and the Democrat and Chronicle puts out only two editions on Sunday. I asked my assistant editor, when I was trying to prepare this speech (because I didn't know exactly who I would be talking to and how much of what I'm doing would be relevant to anyone), how he would rate us as a paper for size and quality. Is what we're doing of any interest to anybody else? He is on the Democrat and Chronicle and he said that on a scale of one to ten (of those papers that Rex was able to list for me as probably having representatives here), he would probably list the Democrat and Chronicle at about a six most of the time. Sometimes we make it to a 6.5 (and if we don't make it to a consistent seven within a couple years he'll probably cut his throat).

This is relevant only because we are working very hard, constantly, increasingly, at putting out a better paper, a more readable paper with more hard news, more background analysis, more synthesis, more investigative reporting -- especially local material -- and we're trying to make all of it a more attractive package. We feel very strongly that with the fragmented bits of news that are going out over T.V. (to the average viewer and our average buyer) there's no way, really, that you can put the fragments into perspective unless you read the material that is provided by the Sunday paper (or in our case, the Times-Union, the Monday paper). So the illustrative library that I'm working on is becoming a major resource for exactly this section of my group. I might also add that in addition to all the editors who call on me for pictures for all of the various sections (we publish eleven sections on Sunday), I have

ten artists and these are probably my largest users for this material.

The tools I have available to me are the semi-glossies that come off the wire machines, the hard glossies from AP, several syndicates (and I get all the material, both the material that runs and the material that does not run), some of the GNS material though not all of it, the unused inhouse shots that our own photographers take and all the T.V. and motion picture stills that come to those departments. After the films leave town, the whole file is trucked into the library and laid on my desk. I get all the PR handouts that go to the money and financial sections and everything, of course, theoretically that ran yesterday.

I'm not talking about the kind of bread and butter stuff that Joe is talking about. As far as I'm concerned; head shots, local scenes and your basic hard news material is your bread and butter and the best you can do is try for a good batting average. We've been pretty lucky on the whole with this but the illustrative library goes beyond this -- it's an extra way of looking at pictures first. It's a new file system, or series of headings to accomodate this material and it's tapping new sources to provide this material. I need to illustrate these to make sense out of them I suspect.

When I'm looking at a picture I'm basically evaluating it for the hard news aspect. Then there's a little flag that goes up in the back of the head and it says, "Is there some detail here that can be useful?" I had a request from an artist who was doing an illustration (we use a lot of drawing material and a lot of color in our Sunday paper) for a story on the smoke and noise pollution at the airport. There were many protests and things were coming to a head at City Council on it. He wanted to use the undercarriage of a jet plane as it went overhead with the smoke streams coming down at you visually. He felt that this would have a good impact. He didn't know what the undercarriage of an airplane looked like with the wheels down. Awhile back there was a shot that hadn't run (it was a very poor quality photograph actually -- kind of a foggy day and the sharpness and the definition were not good) but it was the undercarriage of a plane. The photographer had been trying for a different angle and so he'd taken the shot. It hit me because I had never really seen the undercarriage of a plane in the air before or thought about it in this way so I stuck it in my illustrative file under Airplanes. We don't normally use this kind of broad general heading. We try to be much more specific than this, but this went into my illustrative file on generic airplanes. I was able to provide the artist with it, and he just flipped out, which was very gratifying.

Another way to evaluate a picture is to look to see if this creates some kind of mood. Does this say something about the human condition? I think perhaps I can describe this best by giving you an ideal example of a picture which I do not have but which I'd give my eye teeth to have. I visualize an old man in kind of raggedy, nondescript clothing, sitting on a bench with his head down. You don't have an identification problem at all; he's just sort of a generic old man, slumped sitting there. Maybe there's just sky behind him. Off to one side, just far enough away to be croppable but not so far away that it's meaningless in terms of picture composition, would be a tree or a bush to give it some flexibility. There's the picture

that I would love to have. Now why? Well, I flip out over the ways that you could use this picture -- to illustrate a story on the waste of our senior citizens, to illustrate a story on the problems of the elderly, and/or elderly poor, to illustrate a story on the loneliness of the elderly, the middle aged or the widowed; the overlooked segments (we get this kind of thing all the time), to illustrate a story on mental hospitals (perhaps their need for funds to do something for their long term patients, other than just to house and feed and clothe them), or even to illustrate a story on alcoholism. With a picture like this you can crop it, you can drop backgrounds, you can superimpose the shot on another background. You can put it, for example, in black and white line against a color scene of a busy street or a bunch of kids to illustrate the generation gap. You can do a mezzotint screen on it.

This kind of picture has a great many uses and happily, my editors are not afraid to use a good picture more than once over a period of time or after a lapse of time (if they can doctor it with a screen, or a tint or a dropping of the greys). I have two such pictures that have been used twice. They come to mind because they've both been used within the last year. One of them is a picture that one of our photographers took south of Rochester of some cows grazing on a hillside. Below them there's a brand new suburb going in. Some of the houses are built and occupied; some of them are still under construction. The picture was originally taken to illustrate the problem of the suburban sprawl moving further and further into Monroe County. About six or seven months later, we had a story, basically the same thing from the other side, on what is happening to the old time farmers and their land; the beleagured farmer who lives in a metropolitan county and is trying to hold on to the family heritage in the teeth of rising taxes, spiraling land prices and pressure to sell. So, we used the same picture -- this time using a black and white line. It was very effective in both instances.

A second picture that I have, which I dearly love because it's very poignant, is one that as I remember was a wire service photo. Looking down the street, it shows the back of a small black child leaning against a lamp post in a really cruddy tenement situation. In the middle distance there is an unidentifiable yet clear (but not so that you could put a name to him) adult black man lounging against a doorway. We used this the first time in connection with a local story about whether the inner city schools really were preparing these children for a future. The second time we used it, it had to do with a survey on what was happening to the ghetto situation in the teeth of urban renewel, the people that are still trapped in the remnants and the desolation of the ghetto life. It was a tremendous picture in both cases and the editors didn't seem to feel any reluctance to use it again, because it said exactly what we wanted and that is the whole point.

When the readers leaf through this volume of paper print in front of them, they don't want -- or need -- another mug shot to break up a column of type. We feel that what they need is something that will say to them, "Hey this is going to be interesting!" "This is going to be important to you," or "You really ought to this." This is what we used to call in the advertising racket, a hooker. It's that first attention catcher. From then on your writers have got to do it. They've got to hang onto the reader, but the picture can make the reader stop and at least look at the story. I

feel that this is exactly what the illustration library is helping. Of course, pictures like these that I've mentioned are Jack Horner's plums. You don't often get exactly what you want in one 8x10 glossy, so the illustration files were created to supplement this need.

I have deliberately violated our basic filing rules by being very general I'm actually quite vague, but I justify it in my own conscience by using an "I" in a bracket which says these are sort of bastard shelves -- don't pay any attention to them. I also clip my card file (index cards) that I made for the illustration files when I set it up and I obviously have to cross reference many things that I put in there. I'm using my own headings, for example, "American Life by Decades," because if you need something quickly to show the violence of the 60's as opposed to the apathy of the 50's this is where you go. Families, Moods, Suburbs, Faces (for the artists this all kinds of expressions, this especially because they're called upon for all kinds of expressions) Suburban Living, Violence, Arrests. Generic pictures that are not pinpointable to anybody in Rochester are kept so they can be used as illustrative material to deal with something that may not be specifically Rochester.

I also am using motion picture stills again -- principally for the artists because the stills have scenes we need. We had, maybe everybody did, one of the syndicates run a story on "Is There too Much Violence on TV?". The artists needed illustrations of violence and we were able to find them through some of these files (very, very quickly, which of course is relevant).

I do put in the glossies when they turn up, but even more I clip magazines before they're discarded; I even clip ads from magazines. We discard many magazines regularly simply because we lack the shelf space for them. A couple of the artists and I will divide them up and we'll just rip what looks important. If it's a really beautiful picture, something that could go on a long time such as a mother and a brand new baby in her arms, the type of thing for which you really cannot use your local shots, I do mount it. What I do is go down to Woolworths and get a packet of ivory construction paper and just slap it on. It's just enough to support it in the file. However, most of the time they just go in the file as is.

We also collect books. Now obviously neither of these last sources can be used as is. You cannot photograph the magazine material and you cannot photograph the books. You've got copyright problems (even if you choose to wink at these from time to time) and you've got the awful screen problem, especially if you're using velox screens in addition to the screen that's already on your magazine or book. However, they can be used for the details, for the expressions, for the situations, sometimes even just for layout ideas for the artists (who are always pushed and hard pressed and appreciate any help very much).

As for the books, we have at present about eighty-five that were purchased principally for their pictures. They have turned into quite useful reference tools -- particularly the ones dealing with early TV, early film, etc. The artists are forever looking for when something came out or what did someone play in; so we've used them this way. Basically they were purchased because they do represent faces and movie scenes that I don't have in my files. I should also say that this list (attached to

the end of this paper) was reduced to the sixteen volumes that we have used most consistently. I would say that every book on this list gets used at least a couple of times a year. I put them roughly in order by the amount of use we get out of them in order to you some kind of guideline. They represent a total investment of roughly $150.00. We purchase them mostly through Publishers' Clearing House, so we get them much cheaper than they would have been if we had gotten them brand new at the time they were published.

I might also add that I have no acquisition funds at all and the money to buy these books was scrounged from the three to five dollars a week we make from the public by duplicating microfilm pages and the 25¢ we charge per page for duplicating clipping copies. Do not be discouraged if you have no money. There are ways!

I obviously did not go into the basic, important and very expensive tools, because I can't visualize running a library without those that I mentioned at the end of the book list.

Rex and I also go through a bookstore that we have in Rochester that collects old magazines looking for defunct or out of copyright magazines. These, of course, can be used and quite recently we found a marvelous use. We had a story on the family page dealing with copyrights. As you probably know, Xerox is desperately trying to convince everyone that it is not a generic name, but apparently it is going the way of Kleenex and they're not too happy about it. We were doing a basic research story on generic copyright and copyright names that have turned into generic names. The artists wanted, in connection with this, several early advertising items (it was quite a long story) but particularly the original Campbells Soup Kid. Because I had a 1914 Homemakers Daily (or Weekly whatever it was) that I had cut the Campbells Soup Kid out of, we were able to get a fine photograph of the original drawing, and the artists were really pleased.

As I say, you can get fashions, appliances, advertising trademarks, even a Coke bottle -- we've had two requests for Coke bottles that the artists needed. With this kind of source material available (quite inexpensively) and with a little luck, you can usually come up with something your editor will accept, even if it wasn't what he had in mind originally. If you can add to it ideas about how to use it, visually or graphically, it makes it even easier.

Of course, the little things, the little details are the hardest. The worst request I ever had was for a picture of a peanut butter sandwich. We don't have peanut butter in the cafeteria, all the restaurants around don't have peanut butter so we finally had to send a photographer home for that one. Then there was the thirty minute to deadline request for a picture of the abominable snowman. It took me about four minutes of research to find out that they'd never taken anything but a photograph of his footprint, which I had known once and had forgotten. Once an editor came in and said, "Read this, I've got to illustrate a story about how American women manipulate their men." This is about as broad as you can get for a picture request. I came up with fourteen possible approaches and we did a

composite of three of them. This is the kind of a challenge that makes the job fun, meaningful and interesting.

Now, all I can say is that if anyone of you have any new ideas for illustrative material on abortion and narcotics stories please let me know, would you?

ILLUSTRATIONS BOOK LIST--GANNETT NEWSPAPERS

(In order by amount of use by the staff during an average year)

1. Lehner, Ernst. Picture Book of Symbols. New York, Wm. Penn, 1956.

2. _____. American Symbols. New York, Wm. Penn, 1966.

3. Elting, Mary and Franklin Folsom. Flags of all Nations. New York, Grosset & Dunlap, 1967. (Ed. note: Rev. ed. Flags of All Nations & the People Who Live Under Them. New York, Grosset & Dunlap, 1969. is available)

4. Cirker, Hayward and Blanch Cirker. Dictionary of American Portraits. New York, Dover, 1967. (4,000 pictures of important Americans thru the 20th century)

5. Shulman, Arthur and Roger Youman. How Sweet it was. New York, Bonanza, 1966. (History of TV)

6. Keepnews, Orrin and Bill Grauer, Jr. Pictorial History of Jazz. New York, Crown, 1966.

7. Stuart, Ray. Immortals of the Screen. New York, Bonanza Books, 1965. (Deceased and retired screen stars)

8. Wilcox, R. Turner. The Mode in Costume. New York, Scribners, 1947. (Also 1969 edition available)

9. Zim, Herbert S. and others. Trees: a Golden Nature Guide. New York, Golden, 1952. (Also the other Golden Nature Guides to birds, insects, reptiles, moths, butterflies, etc. The paperback series range from $1.25-$3.95)

10. Huxley, Anthony, ed. Garden Annuals and Bulbs. New York, Macmillan, 1971.

11. _____. Garden Perennials. New York, Macmillan, 1971.

12. Oplt, J. House Plants. London, Hamlyn Pub. Group, Ltd., 1971.

13. Ornamental Shrubs. New York, Hamlyn House for Spring Books, 1970.

14. Time-Life Editors. This Fabulous Century. New York, Time-Life, 1969-1972. 8v. (Covers 1870-1970)

15. Brand, Stewart, ed. The Last Whole Earth Catalog. New York, Random House, 1971.

16. Mirken, Alan, ed. Sears, Roebuck Catalogue: 1902 Edition. New York, Crown for Bounty Books, 1970. (Other editions such as 1927,1908,1900 available)

We purchased all of these for about $150.00, over a period of three years. Obviously, these books represent a supplement to a basic reference/picture book collection containing: the World Book; Life Magazine (bound) including the two Clapp volumes of "Art in Life"; the National Geographic (bound, as far back as practical); American Heritage and the Vance & Tracey Illustration Index, 2nd ed.

Photo Storage and Retrieval

by

Joseph F. McCarthy

The New York News is called "New York's Picture Newspaper". You may assume from that title that we have a few pictures in our files, close to ten million. We add to this collection at the rate of approximately 3,000 a week. As we do periodic weeding of the files, they do not grow at such a fantastic rate. In fact, our files remain fairly constant.

On a typical Sunday, we use about 500 photos in our various editions, but about one-half of these can be safely thrown away after our legal obligations of one year have been met. These photos consist mainly of what we call "suburban (pardon the expression) crap" -"Wedding Belles"; "the fortunate middle class who can take winter vacations on cruise ships"; "PTA mothers who manage to stand in front of the camera at the right time"; "those cute kids and animals", etc. In order that these photos do not clog the files for too long a time, we put them in what we call "bulk files" under the headings of "Travel"; "Little League"; "Children"; etc., and then they are discarded bodily every year. As the people are not important, there is no point in filing them any other way.

Of course, every once in a while something important will happen to one of those nice unimportant middle class persons, and they suddenly become important. Like the woman who recently had the temerity to get herself murdered by her gentle middle class husband. This happened soon after they took a second honeymoon cruise to the Virgin Islands. The story of the murder never did make that connection. Anyway, the photo of the two of them was safely filed under "Travel". We were able to recover the photo in time. This sort of thing doesn't happen too often, though, and it's worth the chance to do bulk filing of certain types of photos.

All other photos which go into the regular files have the captions, as used, pasted on the back, date stamped, and then filed and cross-filed under the names or logical subject headings. Photos which are NOT used in the paper, but considered worthwhile filing, are just date-stamped and then handled in the same way as a used photo. Our big headache with such a huge amount of pictures is the subject files. Some of these files receive an enormous amount of pictures, used and unused. These photos are periodically called for and MUST be produced in a matter of minutes. It is a proud boast of the News library that any photo in our files CAN be retrieved in a matter of minutes. We accomplish this by breaking down the subject into as many categories or sub-heads as is possible. Take the Vietnam War, for instance. During the years we accumulated a full five-drawer cabinet of photos on the subject, 95% of which had been used in the paper. We worked out a system patterned after the World War II and Korean War Photo Files. Earlier this year, when the War ended, our editors decided at the last minutes to put out a special supplement, illustrating the War from beginning to end. We were able to satisfy their needs in a very short time.

Files of well-known personalities, national, international and local also receive a great many photos. These too are broken down into sub-heads and categories. You all have copies of the Index to our Vietnam Photo File, and also the index to our files on President Nixon. You will note the many sub-heads. Let me explain just two things about the Vietnam Photo Index. Pages 1 and 2 are non-war photos... mostly stuff from before we entered the war. Also, "Vietnam" in all cases means "South". North Vietnam is designated as such. It is not a perfect index, but it suits our needs.

Other than that, I think the index is self-explanatory. If there are any questions, you can bring them up during the discussion.

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Photo Storage and Retrieval

by

Mark Hannan

We all know the picture problem, we've been through it for so many years.

By chance, two years ago, an opportunity arose to get rid of one of the main aspects of the problem of the editors saying, "Why don't you have this picture?" The news desk of the Washington Post was reorganized; it now has a staff of ten. In the reorganization they took an excellent picture editor -- we go through picture editors about one a year at the Post -- and put him on the news desk as picture editor. I immediately went to him and said, "O.K., let's get together now on this problem." (Whenever you want to get anything done, as you all know, you let the other person think he's making the suggestion.) I said, "You get 350 wire photos a day. Instead of dumping them back on us, why don't you go through them, select the ones you want saved and put them in a separate package? You can use a 'MUST FILE' stamp and put the others in discards. Do the same with the Post photos and send them all back to us in nice neat bundles." He said, "Yes, that's a good idea; glad I thought of it." So that is what we've done. Now all the photos that come into the library have been weeded before we even get them.

Our own picture man still has final say. He goes through the "MUST FILE" folders and decides whether to save them or not. He goes through the ones that say "DISCARDS" precisely for what you were talking about, Joy: the mood shots, etc. that are so necessary. If he sees any he wants to keep, naturally he keeps them, but the great bulk of the work of weeding pictures is done before the pictures get to the library.

This is a two-fold advantage to the library. When someone comes in screaming at you, "Where's the picture?" you can just look at him and say, "You didn't select it." This throws it right back to them and they can't say a word about it.

We did the same thing with cuts -- we refused to handle them. The Post uses only one-column cuts now. About two years ago, when this shake-up came, we refused to handle cuts unless they were done more systematically. We put the burden on the news desk again and they said, "O.K., we'll take care of it." About a year later the cuts backed up as badly out there as they backed up any other place, so we had to get together again. They wanted to get the cuts back in the library and make them our responsibility again. Cuts used to be about $7.20 apiece about 20 years ago. They were very expensive; now they're relatively inexpensive, and the time wasted in going down to the hell box, getting cuts, bringing them up and identifying them just doesn't justify the $1.20 or whatever they cost in man-hours.

So we again went out to the news desk, this time with a nice floor stack of 4 x 5 card file cabinets and said, "Here Carl, you keep the cuts in these brand new cabinets. You bring them up yourself, and if you need any help identifying them, our picture man will come out and work with you an hour a day. Get them in there so you can have complete control and you'll see how fast they grow." I emphasized, "Clean them out daily or you're just going to be faced with the same problem." Sure enough, within six months they were piling up there.

About a year ago we decided that only sports cuts would go to sports. They go now to sports and they have their own little file back there. The news desk keeps only major people that they think they're going to use again and when they put a new cut in, they throw the old one out. So the primary headache is out there on the news desk.

The third and biggest headache is "Disneyland West" -- or whatever we call our Style department. We go in weekly and they have promised to weed all these things, and only select the television shots and the fashion shots, but invariably they come back with a big basketful and we're faced with the same problem again. There's just no way. I will continue this talk next year if I can defeat the Style department.

Photo Retrieval

by

Bill Chase

My subject, and I promise to be very brief, applies probably more to smaller newspapers than to larger ones. The subject is retrieving the irretrievable and storing the unstorable in the photo files.

I am sure all of you run into this problem at some time or another, of pictures that are improperly fixed or washed or that simply cannot be fixed and washed such as the flimsy photofax type of thing. Perhaps you have the problem too with borrowed pictures, as we do. I think every newspaper at some time must deal with the problem of a picture that is only temporarily in their possession -- one that cannot be filed in the library, usually because it is borrowed or because it has not been properly processed.

The problem for us was how to get a high quality image for our library. Working through the photo department was frustrating. It often meant delay, possibly even loss of material. The photo staff is already very busy and they take a very dim view of assignments from the library at our paper. We needed a system that we could operate in the library.

It consists of a copy stand, a camera with bellows and a macro lens. (I'll show you a picture of it in a moment.) We've been obtaining some very promising results. Exposures are on 35 mm. Panatonic X film, or comparable film, developed slowly to reduce contrast and to obtain the finest grained image.

The procedure is to type the identification for the picture on an aperture first, before anything else is done. We indicate the subject, the date of the picture, the name of the photographer, or the source if it's a borrowed picture

and a unique number. This number consists first of the year (1973); second, the day of the year (today is the 163rd day); and third, the number of the picture taken that day (in this case 001). Cross reference tracings can also be placed on this card.

The aperture card and the gray scale are then placed face up together on the easel. The exposure is made, the film is developed and the negative is inserted at this point into the already made aperture card. It is ready to file. There is no need to make a copy print-out. The result is an archivally permanent fine-grained silver image with full identification, gray scale and cross reference tracing located integrally on the negative image. All necessary information is on the image and is also on the card. Cross reference cards can be made on tab cards as well.

This system can also be used for reproducing images of small, three dimensional objects such as coins and stamps and gems, which we have occasion to reproduce. Filming can be done in seconds while the photo owner or the reporter waits. Processing is done in batches. Ordinarily we process the film once a week. Once the machine is set up it can be operated with minimal training and with reliable results.

I do have some samples which you are welcome to look at. This is the original; this is the copy -- it is somewhat reduced. It is, I think, a reproducible and an acceptable image for engraving. Here are three prints, one original and two copies, made on slightly different contrast paper (3 and 4 contrast, but hardly distinguishable). As a matter of fact, on test, even photographers have not always picked the right one.

In any case, it is a home-developed system, it's inexpensive and it has worked. It has proven to be reliable in our library.

A few articles of interest to newspaper (photo) librarians.

Picture searching; techniques and tools. By Renata V. Shaw. 1973. NYC, Special Libraries Assn.

Procedures for processing and storing black and white photographs for maximum possible permanence. 1970. Grinnell, Iowa, East Street Gallery.

A graphic catalog card index. By Elizabeth M. Lewis. American Documentation, July 1969, pp 238-246.

How to use the picture researcher. By Yvonne R. Freund and Ann Novotny. Publishers Weekly, Feb 14, 1972, pp 36-38.

Picture retrieval by concept coordination. By Stanley Rice. Special Libraries, Dec 1969. pp 627-634.

The visual image. By E. H. Gombrich. Scientific American, Sept 1972, pp 82-96.

Microfilm permanence and archival quality standards. By Don M. Avedon. Special Libraries. Dec 1972, pp 586-588.

Specifications for the microfilming of newspapers in the Library of Congress. Washington, Library of Congress. Washington, Library of Congress, 1972.

Preservation microfilming. By Ladd Z. Sajor. Special Libraries, Apr 1972. pp 195-201.

Unconventional photographic systems, how will they change your library. By Monty M. Maxwell. Wilson Library Bulletin, Feb 1972. pp 518-524.

PHOTO STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL
QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

If you have questions or comments to make, please identify yourself and your newspaper. Please indicate whom you wish to ask.

Q. Joy, in your picture library, how many employees do you have?

A. Joy Hill, Rochester (N. Y.) Gannett Newspapers: I have a part-time woman who takes care of the metal and the concomitant head shots. We file everything thirteen picas and under because the two papers don't use the same sizes of metal. That is really a very heavy job for her, but she is good!

I also have the services of a part-time file clerk. We file pictures twice a week, and we're mostly snowed under, so you can see why I can't afford to spend the week here.

Q. Bill, could I ask you your capital expenses in your equipment?

A. Bill Chase, Flint (Mich.) Journal: In the copying equipment, the total cost of the stand was about $35.00. The camera, bellows and lens about $600.00.

Q. Leslie McShane, Denver (Colo.) Post: How do you handle your oversize pictures?

A. Joe McCarthy, New York (N. Y.) Daily News: Many times the make-up men in the art department want a large print. When they make the engraving, it reduces better and it makes a better cut. They send enlarged prints to us. We have very few cabinets that hold these large prints. They get to be a nuisance after awhile, so if possible, we cut them down to an 8" x 10" size, or recopy them in the studio to an 8" x 10" size. If the negative is made by our photographer, we can throw that big print away and make an 8" x 10" copy from the negative. If it's an AP or UPI print we take it to the studio, they recopy it and that way we get a small print.

Some can't be cut down according to the subject. If it can't be cut down, we will hold the print awhile and if it's not used again after a certain time, we throw it away. Most of the time you can get a smaller print of the same thing.

Q. Ann Sausedo, Washington (D. C.) Washington Star-News: Is there a limitation on the size of the photo that you can make your copies from?

A. Bill Chase: There is no practical limitation. You can set this up to take a picture of the end of the room, if you want to.

Q. Ann Sausedo: Then in other words, you can photograph the oversize prints?

A. Bill Chase: Yes, within our own library.

Q. What is the time involved in getting a print from that aperture card?

A. Bill Chase: It is a matter of 90 seconds or so in getting a well worked, stabilized print.

Q. Clem Vitek, Baltimore (Md.) Sun: I'd like to ask a question of you, Bill, and of Mark at the same time because you two seem to have opposite philosophies. I have some of the same problems that both of you have and I can see how there could be a marriage of some of the ideas you both have.

However, am I reading you correctly in that Mark would much rather get rid of the pictures altogether and put them out there with the people that have to use them and you, in turn, are turning around and becoming part of the photographic department rather than being a librarian? I can't quite see the resolution on this situation.

A. Mark Hannan, Washington (D. C.) Post: Actually, I'd like to get rid of them completely. I'm a clip librarian and I feel that pictures are a necessary headache that we have to keep with us. I don't think we'll ever get rid of them.

However, my philosophy on farming it out is strictly from a self-protection standpoint of being able to say, "You did not select that picture." I'm protecting the library and putting some of the responsibility on the picture editor of the news desk. This is strictly a defensive attitude on my part because of all of the many arguments and fights we've been through over not saving a specific picture.

Years ago the finest picture man we ever had in the library was one who used to be able to stand there when the managing editor would come in and say, "I just sent that picture back here." This fellow (who had just torn the picture up) would say, "That picture never came in here, Mr. Gilbert." That's my idea of a picture editor!

A. Bill Chase: For my part of the answer, I share Mark's feeling about being more interested in clippings and bibliographic reference than in photographs. However, I don't have a chance of getting rid of the photographs. To avoid the conflict between the photo department (which didn't want the job) and the library (which didn't want it either but had to do it), we settled on this as a workable scheme. It saves a lot of headaches.

Q. Joy Hill: May I interject something? One of the things we are hoping to do eventually is to totally divorce my graphic operation from the clipping file, so that Rex's operation is solely informational. The picture library will be an adjunct of both the photography department and graphic arts.

Q. Lou Thomas, Baton Rouge (La.) State-Times: Is anyone entertaining the idea of filing negatives from the engraving department -- when you send your wire photos down, then file the negative after it's been screened and shot?

A. My engraving department said there would be very little point on anything over a one column because the minute they try to change the size, they're dead. Your screens would conflict very badly, so it was not worth it.

Q. Lou Thomas: Well, if you've got the wire photo and you don't have the copying equipment, how do you protect yourself?

A. You tell your editor you need at least the semiglossies that you can wash.

Q. Lou Thomas: Then when you've said that and you still don't get them, what does the library have to fall back on?

Q. Is anyone else saving screen negatives from the photo department?

A. We recently have gone offset and at this point they want to save everything.

A. Our editors did discuss the possibility of setting up a screen negative file or a file of velox or PMT prints. It was their conclusion that it was not worth doing. It was better to work from original photographs in each case.

Q. Lou Thomas: What if you don't have the original? Do you just give up?

A. Why don't you have the original photograph? Because it came in as a flimsy? It would be cheaper to copy it than it would be to file it.

A. Lou Thomas: We've considered that. That's why I am asking if anybody tried it.

Q. Does AP immediately send over a glossy?

A. Not unless you pay for it.

A. I would love to get a copying facility in my library. You don't even have to buy a camera. You can borrow one once a week from the photo department. Personally, I think it is not intruding into the darkroom department. It's like the archival microfilm; we make those.

Q. I've often wondered why librarians have to keep pictures at all since they are used primarily as graphic material and in many instances the final decision for use is made not only by an editor but an artist. Why wouldn't it be better to give the whole thing over to an art department? Let them hire a librarian if they want to save files, but keep the clipping and book collections completely separate.

A. Joe McCarthy, New York (N. Y.) Daily News: That's the system the New York (N. Y.) Times has. They have three different departments: a clipping department, a photo department and a book department. The problem is that the art department is not the only department to use photographs. We have 16 to 20 different departments that call on us for photographs.

A. It wouldn't make any difference, Joe, you still have the photographs. It doesn't make any difference where they have to go.

A. Joe McCarthy: Then they would have to hire a librarian to take care of that. I don't think the union would permit a librarian to work in the art department. There would have to be a meeting with the union in New York.

Q. You are speaking primarily as a picture librarian, aren't you?

A. Joe McCarthy: I have more clippings than I have pictures. Joy is talking about using illustrative pictures and Mark is saying that his editors don't know whether they're sending them in or not. Bill is saying, "I want to save these flimsies but I can't because they're going to destroy everything else; I have to re-photograph them." Then why not put it in the hands of experts who handle photographic materials, who know what they are and how to use them. If they want a librarian, a file clerk or whatever to keep things in order, then hire one. I don't see any conflict in letting it be taken away from what we normally consider a newspaper library or morgue. I think years ago photos were sent to our department because nobody else wanted them or knew what to do with them and so they dumped the collection in the library.

A. Well it's valuable material and it belongs in the morgue.

Q. Mark Hannan: Three or four years ago they reorganized our art department and got Joe Mastrangalo from the New York (N. Y.) Times, who is another pro. We got together right away and he ended up with all the maps. He requested it. Any map that runs in the Post or comes on the wire goes to Mastrangalo who is in charge of the art department. We supply

him with the file cabinets for it, and in the course of a year he has picked up a "news aide," as they call them, who does his map filing and everything. It's all completely away from us again. He's very happy because he knows what he wants; the map problem was just unsolvable because they use the same basic map for so many things. Who would know better where to put it than the artists who are going to use it. It's a simple solution that has worked out just great and they've picked up a full time news aide.

A. I'd like to make one comment on Clem's question. In part, the answer is a function of size. For a paper of my size it doesn't make sense to suggest that a separate map library be established under another department, or a separate picture library. (Much as I'd like to get rid of some of these things.) For a larger paper, where you could justify a person's expertise and time, it might make a lot of sense. So in part, it may be a different answer for different papers.

Q. I want to address Joe McCarthy. Joe, have you considered going into an electronic system at all?

A. Joe McCarthy: An electronic system of filing pictures? I'm open to anything. If a system comes along that's usable then I certainly will go into it. I haven't found anything yet that is suitable. I don't think there is one. I think there are a number of companies working on it. I imagine somebody is working on the filing of pictures in the same way as clips and reproducing them.

Q. Aren't some people at MIT working on electronic storage and retrival techniques with pictures?

A. Yes. I don't think they have come up with anything yet. I certainly would be happy if they do -- anything that will save a little work and time and effort and money, let's have it.

Q. A couple people at MIT do have some systems. Maybe you could tell us?

Q. Are you referring to electronic processes for storing and retrieving pictures?

A. Yes.

Q. Does anyone from Boston or elsewhere know anything about any electronic storage and retrieval techniques for use with pictures?

A. Dave Rhydwen has a system for microfilming photographs with computer-type cataloging. I thought people might be interested in hearing about this.

A2. George Collins, Boston (Mass.) Globe: I probably ought to keep my mouth shut, but one of the things that they told me when they asked me if I would consider becoming the Globe's librarian was that they have been at work for approximately a year with some people whose names I cannot pronounce.

Q. Reintjes?

A. Yes, and some others in conjunction with ANPA. (Ed. Note: The ANPA Advanced Research Program is conducted by the MIT Electronic Systems Laboratory.) The Globe is apparently going to become a pilot paper for storage and retrieval of information, pictures, etc. As soon as we get any information we'll pass it along. (Ed. Note: Copies of the report entitled, "Recommendations for the Boston Globe Library," can be obtained by writing directly to: John Taylor, Boston Globe, Boston, Massachuetts, 02107.)

The Globe has seven Lektrievers full of photos. The photography department stores the negatives; we store the glossies. I was the Globe's photo editor for 10 years so I have a reverence for photographs. I really can't agree that photos should be handled in the editorial department. I don't think many photo editors are anything more than clerks. The old photo editor has disappeared except maybe on the New York (N. Y.) Daily News. When I was the photo editor I came in and sat everyday and they gave me 8, 10, 20, 30 columns to fill. It was my selection. I built the picture pages. Today the photo editor sits down and an editor from somewhere says give me a two column, 65 line deep picture to illustrate a bomb being dropped on a rice paddy in Vietnam. The photo editor gets up and comes to the Globe library and says give me a picture of a bomb being dropped on a rice paddy in Vietnam. If that's what they think a photo editor is, I don't want him storing pictures.

A. To further answer the gentlemen, I think Bill's storage problem could be done electronically by matching those cards he has, if you want to reduce your pictures. I think this is what Dave Rhydwen does, isn't it? He reduces them to a 35 mm film and puts them in the computer. Then you have the trouble of reproduction. That is the only way I know of doing it. Dave has been doing it. If a reporter wants a packet of pictures from his place he doesn't give them to him. Dave has him come in and look at the pictures and pick the ones he wants.

A. He doesn't publish 500 pictures a day either.

A. Yes, that's another thing. You have to go by what you do.

Q. Doesn't he have the Kalvar positive, not the negatives, for them to look at?

A. Well, he has a depository.

A. If you have a stabilization process in your library then you can produce a dry print in about 60 or 90 seconds.

A. Yes, but the Chicago (Ill.) Tribune has a large staff. I think I mentioned this was a problem to Dave a couple years ago. He doesn't let that stuff out of the library. The Tribune or the New York (N. Y.) Daily News would have a line-up from here to the Hilton Hotel standing outside the door waiting to look at these things. They want the packet of photos and that's it.

A. Again, if you have to reproduce like that there's no reason that you can't put your Kalvar copies out front and keep your negatives in the library.

Q. That's just a sitting room; now what about the eighteen other departments that use our photos?

Q. Maybe I missed your questions, but didn't you mean the whole picture could be stored inside a computer and recalled.

A. You were talking about miniaturizing pictures on film.

A. We want to store and then be able to retrieve them with all of a quality we can reproduce. In other words put them in a cathode ray tube. You want it all stored inside a computer and recalled. That would be very quick.

MIT has been looking into this kind of thing to get it broken down and stored in little electronic impulses. You don't have a picture until you call it out of the computer. I think this is probably the answer to what he is asking.

A. Joe McCarthy: You and I won't be here when that happens.

Q. What is the cost of printing?

A. The cost per shot (using Panasonic X film and conventional developing methods) is about two cents (using bulk film) and so on. It would be perfectly possible to do this with a planetary microfilm camera. If we had the volume someone like Joe McCarthy had, this would make sense.

Q. Does the image transfer deteriorate?

A. Yes, but you still get high quality copy.

A. Joe McCarthy: I have discarded microfilm in my own clippings. I have a camera and everything right in the office. Just about two months ago I decided, "Why can't we be doing this for the photographs?" So I took a couple of test shots (some AP wire photos, some UP glossies and some regular Daily News photographs made by our photographers). I filmed them on 16 mm film. When I got them back I put them in the sleeves and I brought them out to the studio and said, "Hey, would you reproduce these?" Well they were

16 mm and they're mainly set up for 35 mm and larger. The photographers said it could be done. They had to get two men to do it. They had to get their enlarger. I said, "Make me a few prints." I'm sorry I didn't bring them because they were acceptable; the quality not as good, but they were engravable. I was thinking of doing this for some of my larger dead files like World War II. I've got cabinets upon cabinets of World War II photographs, which are too good to throw away. So during the course of this year I may start microfilming some of those World War II photographs and have them like I have my clippings -- on microfiche. I'll bring some next year. They are not too bad; it's good enough.

A. Joy Hill: Before we started getting the UPI in semigloss form we were just getting the flimsies. We experimented using our Kalvar cards that we put our back copy material on when we are weeding. We found we could read them for content on the regular micro-printer, take them to directly to engraving and get a very sharp engraving right off the negative. You don't need an intermediary step. There is really no point in duplicating to glossy.

A. There is no reason why Kalvar aperture cards could not be made positive in any number of copies. They could be put in a reader examined for content and crop marks, as Joy does.